2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
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mats of the hut. The floor in the interior is smeared over with a mixture of cowdung and blood, often renewed, and is covered with skins. In the centre a depression is made as a hearth for the fire, and round this are stretched the mats or skins on which the inmates sleep. To the right of the rear opening is erected a frame of four poles with a net spread over them. On and under this are placed all sorts of household possessions.

Family and Kinship

Each family has its own hut, where the children remain with their parents till marriage. Occasionally a number of young girls share a hut together, also even at times a number of boys, but this is not general. It is much more usual for the members of the family to remain together in the same hut until a new household is formed by the marriage of a son or daughter. The family in a narrow sense thus comprises a man, his wife, and their unmarried children.[1] All the Hottentot tribes formerly permitted polygyny, which, however, was not practised to any great extent. More than two wives were seldom found. Each wife had her own hut, in which she lived with her children, while the husband stayed as a rule in the hut of his first wife. Nowadays, the people are ostensibly monogamists. After marriage the wife goes to live with her husband's people, although the husband may stay for some time with her parents' group before finally returning with her to his own home. Marriage is thus actually patrilocal, but in exceptional cases, if there is good reason for it, the wife will remain altogether with her own people, the husband joining them permanently.

Each family has its own herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, and in moving with them in search of water and grass will often act independently of the rest. Nowadays it is largely the desire for social intercourse that induces the people to form a camp, although in the old days the need of protection against enemies must also have been a powerful motive.

From the way in which related families still tend to camp together, it will be seen that kinship is a factor of great importance in the social life of the Hottentots. The relationship system of the people,[2] as

[1] Hahn, op. cit., 332; Kohler, op. cit., 342; Wandres, "Khoi-Khoin," 317; von François, op. cit., 212 sq.

[2] Hoernlé, op. cit., 17–23. The list of relationship terms given by Schultze, op. cit., 299–322, differs in some details from the above, and is not so complete.

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by them, although the technological processes involved are dealt with to some extent by Kolb and more fully still by Schultze. But the social side of the industries—forms of work, economic motives, division of labour, and so on—has received hardly any attention at all. It is difficult therefore to give an adequate picture of the industrial activities of the Hottentots. This difficulty is increased by the fact that ever since contact with Europeans was established there has been a gradual substitution of European goods for native products, until at the present time the productive work of the Hottentots, where it is still carried on, has to a considerable extent acquired a new character.

The main economic unit in Hottentot life, as far as one can judge, is the family. Each family not only has its own herds and flocks, thus providing for the greater part of its subsistence, but in a large degree also manufactures the objects required for its domestic purposes. The construction of the huts, the making of whose mats is still an important native craft, has already been described. The other forms of industry may be grouped under the main heads of skin-dressing, netting, pottery, wood-carving, stone- and metal-work.

Before the Europeans came into the country, the skins of domestic animals and game provided the sole material for the clothing of the Hottentots, as well as for a number of other objects. Nowadays, except perhaps in a few remote places, clothing is almost entirely of European pattern and material, but skins are still used for other purposes. Among the Cape Hottentots, it would appear from Kolb's account,[1] the preparation of skins was mainly the work of the men. Skins used for making clothing, karosses, etc., were dressed by the craftsman repeatedly rubbing into the fleshy side as much fat as possible, and then beating them hard with the kirri, until they became quite tough and smooth; or they were alternately rubbed with cowdung and fat, and then carefully dried in the sun. They were then sewn together with sinews, generally taken from the back of an ox, the pointed leg-bone of a bird being used as an awl. Ox hides were either used for lining the hut, or cut into thongs with which objects were bound on the backs of pack-oxen. To loosen the hair the fresh skin was sprinkled with ashes and water, then rolled up and exposed for a day or two to the heat of the sun, and after depilation it was rendered supple by being rubbed in with fat. Finally, if required for thongs, it was pegged out on the ground and cut into long strips of about the same width by means of a sharp iron blade.

[1] Op. cit., 110–12.